



Australian Bureau of Statistics

5240.0 - Unpaid Work and the Australian Economy, 1997

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Unpaid work \$261 billion - ABS finding

The value of unpaid work - 91 per cent of it unpaid household work - was about \$261 billion in 1997, equivalent to about 48 per cent of Australia's gross domestic product (GDP), according to figures released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

The \$261 billion estimate was arrived at by assigning values to the time spent on unpaid work - including unpaid household and volunteer and community work - according to the cost of hiring a market replacement for individual activities. For example, time spent on cleaning was valued using a rate of pay for commercial cleaners. Other methods of valuing unpaid work produce somewhat different results.

Between 1992 and 1997, the value of unpaid work increased by 16 per cent (using the individual function replacement cost method), although as a percentage of GDP it fell six percentage points, from 54 per cent to 48 per cent. Several reasons could account for the decline in the value of unpaid work as a percentage of GDP, one of the most significant being slower growth in the average hourly wage rates for the occupations used to value unpaid work, compared with growth in average hourly wage rates more generally.

Unpaid household work contributed \$237 billion (or 91 per cent) to the total value of unpaid work in 1997. Females accounted for 65 per cent of the value of unpaid household work. The most significant activities for females were food and drink preparation and clean-up (25 per cent) and child care (14 per cent). For males, the most significant activity was also food and drink preparation and clean-up (17 per cent), followed by purchasing (14 per cent).

The value of unpaid household work in 1997 per person (aged 15 years or over) was about \$16,900. For both males and females, the value of unpaid household work per married person was greater than the value per unmarried person. The value of unpaid household work per person for those not employed was greater than the value for those employed, also for both males and females.

Males contributed 44 per cent to the value of volunteer and community work in 1997, with females contributing the remaining 56 per cent.

Estimates of the time spent on various activities, which are used to compile the unpaid work estimates, are drawn from the ABS's Time Use Surveys.

Further details on unpaid work, including estimates based on other approaches to valuing unpaid household work, may be found in the publication **Unpaid Work and the Australian Economy** (cat. no. 5240.0) available from ABS bookshops. The main features of the publication are available on this site. If you wish to purchase a copy of this publication, contact the ABS

Bookshop webpage. Thank You.

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